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Chairman: Mr. Wali (Nigeria)

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Swaziland, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia and Zambia.

Draft resolution on assistance for humanitarian relief and the economic and social rehabilitation of Somalia (A/C.2/60/L.8)

11. **Mr. Abdi** (Somalia) introduced the draft resolution. The need for humanitarian assistance in war-torn Somalia had become even more urgent with the recurrence of drought and, more recently, the devastating effects of extreme cold spells. Some parts of the country were experiencing drought for the fifth consecutive year, and extremely cold temperatures, accompanied by strong winds, had resulted in the deaths of 50 to 60 per cent of surviving livestock in the north-east. Increased poverty had, in turn, caused the number of internally displaced persons to swell.

12. As Member States were aware, the economic and social infrastructure of Somalia had been decimated by long years of civil unrest. Rehabilitation of the country's economic and social base would facilitate the delivery of much-needed services to the Somali people and, ultimately, the transition to peace made possible by the successful reconciliation process and the formation of the country's first all-inclusive government of national unity.

13. The 2004 tsunami had killed 300 Somalis, displaced 55,000 people and altered the geographical outline of the country's north-eastern coast. It had also aggravated the impact of nuclear and toxic waste illegally dumped along the Somali coastline, an issue that had both legal and moral connotations. He questioned, in particular, the negotiation of a hazardous waste disposal contract with entities bent on financial gain and the exploitation of natural resources in the midst of a protracted civil war.

14. He hoped the draft resolution would be adopted by consensus.

Agenda item 125: Programme planning (A/60/16, sections C.1 and C.2, chapter III)

15. **The Chairman** said that the General Assembly, in its resolution 54/236 and paragraph 4 of Section III of resolution 53/242, had decided that the Second Committee should review recommendations contained in the report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (A/60/16) relating to its work and take appropriate action.

15. Accordingly, the Committee must consider the recommendations contained in chapter III of the report, namely section C.1 entitled "Evaluation of linkages between headquarters and field activities: a review of best practices for poverty eradication in the framework of the United Nations Millennium Declaration" (paras. 131 to 139) and section C.2 entitled "In-depth evaluation of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme" (paras. 151 to 158).

16. Those two sections were relevant to the Committee's work under agenda item 53 on implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and item 56 on eradication of poverty and other development issues.

17. Mr. Lee, Chief of the Poverty Eradication and Employment Section of the Division for Social Policy and Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Ms. Gebre-Egziabher, Director of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) in New York and Mr. Yee Woo Gun, Chief of the Evaluation Section of the Office of Internal Oversight Services were present at the meeting to answer delegations' questions on those two issues.

18. **Ms. Mills** (Jamaica), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group attached particular importance to the content of paragraph 137 under section C.1. The Committee for Programme and Coordination had acknowledged that the report did not devote sufficient attention to coordination between the United Nations and national Governments. She called for stronger efforts to harmonize the Organization's initiatives with the needs and priorities of individual countries. That issue should be highlighted in future.

19. Beyond merely taking note of General Assembly resolution 59/250 on the triennial comprehensive policy review, Recommendation 9 in the corresponding report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (E/AC.51/2005/2) should have emphasized more strongly that that resolution laid down the guidelines for strengthening the capacity of the resident coordinators.

20. **Mr. Seth** (Secretary of the Committee) said that the comments made by the representative of Jamaica, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, would be included in a letter from the Chairman to the Chairman of the Fifth Committee on the Committee's

consideration of the report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination.

Agenda item 49: Information and communication technologies for development (A/60/11 and A/60/323)

21. **Mr. Herman** (Senior Advisor on Information Management Policy Coordination, Secretariat of the Chief Executives Board for Coordination), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on information and communication technologies for development: progress in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 57/295 (A/60/323), said that the organizations of the United Nations system had made considerable progress since the adoption of the resolution in utilizing those technologies effectively. The resolution also stressed the need to use technology to create a seamless collaborative environment among all bodies of the United Nations system. Considerable progress had been made in that direction, including the adoption of the United Nations system ICT strategic framework, created by the ICT Task Force describing the principles for moving towards a unified technology environment. More recently, the ICT Network had identified and was pursuing initiatives to implement the framework.

22. One impediment was the diverse nature of the United Nations system: although commonalities existed, each organization confronted its own unique mandate-driven objectives and one size did not fit all.

23. Another obstacle was the problem of sunken cost. United Nations organizations had invested heavily in their technology infrastructures and operational systems and were understandably reluctant to dismantle functioning, costly systems simply for the sake of change. Moreover, changing systems always required additional investment, even in situations where savings might result in the future. Furthermore, no facility existed to assist organizations with the financial and administrative burden of changing ICT systems in order to align themselves with other organizations. Many organizations would need to justify such expenses to their governing bodies and would need to demonstrate quantifiable and concrete benefits for such system changes.

24. Although organizations performed many of the same tasks, they carried them out differently and had built slightly different systems and accompanying support processes. To align a computer system across all or even many organizations first required aligning the business operations that drove those systems. That was an operational leadership challenge, not a technical one. The ICT Network was leading a discussion of the possibility of creating a single human resources and payroll capability across the system by addressing the human resources, finance and ICT issues.

25. Such challenges were a reminder that calls to harmonize and integrate ICT activities must be viewed as calls to harmonize and integrate operational and administrative activities. The ICT leadership could identify opportunities for efficiencies but the administrative and programme leadership had to embrace the changes required to move from opportunity to reality.

26. **Mr. Chowdhury** (Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States) said that ICT offered the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States opportunities for more effective participation in the digital global society and could enhance their productive capacity. Their lack of resources, human capacity and technology jeopardized their potential for sustainable development and underscored the need for the international community to provide them with support on a priority basis in order to enhance their ICT capacity.

27. Pursuant to Commitment 4 of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010, which called for building productive capacities to make globalization work for the least developed countries, those countries had committed themselves to articulating appropriate policies and measures and their development partners had committed themselves to providing financial, technical and other assistance, including facilitating access to or providing technology as part of their ODA. The commitments had been translated into measurable targets.

28. The Almaty Programme of Action identified trade facilitation as a priority. The broad application of modern information technology would facilitate the speedy movement of goods in transit. Landlocked developing countries would benefit from an improved

support to facilitate their access to fibre optic submarine cable systems.

70. Urgent measures should be undertaken to accord special treatment to small island developing States. Deliberate and prudent use of information technology would go a long way towards reducing the isolation of remote islands and would enable them to deal more effectively with a host of constraints, particularly in the areas of trade development, health, education, security and technology transfer.

80. He welcomed the African initiative to establish the Digital Solidarity Fund and the fact that 60 per cent of the project resources of the Fund would be devoted to the least developed countries. He hoped that contributions beyond those made by the founding members would be forthcoming.

81. **Mr. Hachani** (Tunisia) said that, while there was a more evident interest on the part of the international community in ICT, the global digital situation was evolving in a disproportionate and fragmented manner. The digital divide was the most endemic expression of poverty. The development of ICT had not benefited all countries equally and was continuing to deepen the digital divide between regions, social categories and individuals. Thus far, ICT had been much more a source of marginalization than a factor for integration. Used wisely and adapted to local contexts, it activated economic and human development and opened the way to partnership and investment. Increasingly, the integration of ICT as a strategic development instrument was no longer merely an option, but an imperative. For the developing countries, and in particular the poorest among them, the digital divide was more a problem of infrastructure and social investment than one of access. The challenge was therefore not merely technological but specifically socio-economic. ICT could not replace a genuine policy of development. Its integration within an international cooperation and partnership context was capable of activating the development process and enhancing its results.

82. Tunisia was convinced that the World Summit on the Information Society, the second phase of which it would be hosting in November 2005, was capable of providing an international response to the digital problem and bringing forward solutions that would meet the expectations of all elements of the international community and the goals of the Millennium Declaration. All actors — governments, civil society and the private sector — should make their own contributions to building an information society that was balanced and accessible to all.

83. Welcoming the progress made in establishing the United Nations system ICT strategic frameworks, he said that the cooperation between the ICT Task Force and the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) should be enhanced in order to build on the synergies in designing and implementing technological solutions that were best adapted to the United Nations context.

84. **Mr. Neil** (Jamaica), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that ICT was vital to development and to harmony among States and peoples. However, those technologies and the policies which governed access and use to them had begun to contribute exponentially to widening the digital divide. He welcomed the work undertaken thus far to implement General Assembly resolution 57/295 and the efforts to that end made by CEB and its bodies, including the ICT Network and the ICT Task Force. The organizations of the United Nations system had demonstrated their commitment and capacity to further harness their diverse activities in the field of ICT, and his delegation looked forward to tangible results enabling the United Nations to build on its strengths in knowledge creation, knowledge management and knowledge sharing.

85. In particular, the delegations on whose behalf he was speaking welcomed progress in such areas as enhanced support for intergovernmental bodies and access for Member States and their Permanent Missions to online information and documentation, and he underscored their continuing interest in such online tools as a common search engine for the United Nations system and a more uniform e-mail transmission system.

86. All improvements in ICT infrastructure and access should serve the paramount objective of enhancing programme delivery and helping organizations of the United Nations system fulfil their mandates in a more coherent and effective manner. In that context, and given the new tasks entrusted to the Economic and Social Council by the 2005 World Summit in the respect of ensuring coordination and avoiding duplication, the Council should be more actively engaged in the process of developing and

implementing a comprehensive ICT strategy for the United Nations system.

37. The overall objective was to strengthen support for the implementation of the development agenda which had emerged from the 2005 World Summit and to use ICT as an instrument to accomplish that goal. The internationally agreed development goals of the United Nations were at the centre of the Declaration of Principles and the Plan of Action adopted during the Geneva phase of the World Summit on the Information Society. A multi-stakeholder approach was central to success in that area. He expressed the hope that the work of the Task Force would be pursued in the broader perspective of the integrated follow-up to conference outcomes in which the Economic and Social Council was again expected to play a central role.

38. The organizations of the United Nations system must work together through CEB to help transform the system into a knowledge-based system of organizations that could serve the cause of development and poverty eradication much more effectively.

39. The Group of 77 and China had given full support in the Doha Plan of Action to efforts to achieve the objectives of the World Summit on the Information Society, particularly those contained in the Declaration of Principles and the Plan of Action, and especially universal access to information and knowledge for all, democratic Internet governance and respect for cultural diversity and identity, linguistic diversity and local content. The delegations hoped that the Digital Solidarity Fund would play a very positive role in expanding access to ICT by developing countries. A number of critical issues remained to be negotiated at the forthcoming Tunis Summit, including equitable arrangements regarding Internet governance and the expansion of the role of developing countries. Development partners must demonstrate the will and flexibility to ensure that the World Summit on the Information Society created conditions enabling all developing countries to benefit from the potential of ICT. A supportive United Nations system and a well-designed and well-financed plan of action and appropriate policies adopted at the Summit would promote that objective.

40. **Mr. Shamanov** (Russian Federation) said that, with the rapid process of globalization ICT was increasingly important as a genuine instrument of socio-economic development, in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and in the provision of sustainable development, and as an important factor for stability and security in the world. Discussion of the issue within the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council provided the necessary system-wide context for developing a coordinated approach to a series of issues related to the interconnection between ICT and development, overcoming the digital divide and the construction of an integrated global information society. Adequate socio-economic conditions must be created to bridge the gap between developed and developing countries in accordance with the Millennium Declaration and subsequent United Nations decisions. Other problems that stemmed from the "information revolution" included the vulnerability of the cybercommunity to crime and terrorism. Attention should focus on a comprehensive analysis of the problem as a whole and on the development of a careful and balanced assessment of intersectoral linkages.

41. The second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society, to be held in Tunis in November 2005, should reflect the interests and needs of all countries, decide on effective and targeted joint action with all parties concerned in the process of building an information society, and find ways fully to implement the potential of ICT in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. An important contribution was being made by the work under the auspices of the ICT Network of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) and the ICT Task Force. The Russian Federation had noted with satisfaction the progress made in creating the United Nations system ICT strategic framework and the transition to the practical stage of concrete initiatives to consolidate those frameworks.

42. The United Nations system, and particularly the ICT Task Force, should serve as a catalyst for the efforts of the international community to create conditions for equitable access to and full utilization of ICT by all countries. The Russian Federation valued the Task Force's work on the conceptual and practical elements of a comprehensive approach to resolving global issues involved in using ICT for the purposes of development and its increased collaboration with other key international players in the ICT field. The entire work of the ICT Task Force should be in strict conformity with its mandate, and should not duplicate

or replace the functions of the relevant institutions within the United Nations system, such as the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

43. **Mr. Poojary** (India) said that the information technology revolution presented an excellent opportunity for countries to increase the pace and scope of development and marked a significant shift in the relative importance of different resources and factors of production in the development process. The shift from material- to knowledge-based resources opened up vast opportunities for the developing countries to accelerate the pace of development. The greatest potential lay in the use of information technology to stimulate the development of other sectors of the domestic economy. Apart from generating new employment opportunities, the application of information technology could vastly and cheaply expand access to education, health care, markets, financial services, vocational skills, administrative services and other aspects of modern society. It could dramatically reduce the cost of communication, improve access to technology and marketing capabilities for the rural poor, eliminate exploitation by intermediaries in the production and distribution chains, increase government accountability and stimulate democratic participation.

44. His country's green revolution illustrated how the input of greater knowledge in the form of improved production technologies could rapidly increase the productivity of land. He cited statistics illustrating the very significant impact of information technology on the economy of his country and on society as a whole. His delegation believed that it was necessary to develop human resources through education in order to benefit from ICT. A new educational technology developed in India sought to achieve mass computer literacy at a cost that made it available to all children. Cultural differences notwithstanding, in other countries where the technology had been introduced — Cambodia, Egypt and South Africa — the benefits had been virtually identical and were highly appreciated.

45. Similarly, vocational training centres and information technology institutions that provided the specific skills demanded by the market played a pivotal role. The development of such skills attracted private investment, including foreign direct investment, and in turn contributed to economic growth and poverty reduction. It was important to utilize ICT to close the education gap that separated the world's most prosperous communities from their poorer cousins.

46. Given the pace of revolutionary change in the field of ICT, the digital divide was widening daily, demonstrating the urgency of concerted action by the international community. Inexpensive ICT developed in India was being shared with other developing countries, and his country was also extending technical assistance to a number of developing countries to help them develop information technology infrastructure, networking, and e-governance systems. Within three years, all African nations would be in a position to benefit from a connectivity project his country had recently launched. He underscored the value of e-commerce in removing geographical barriers and creating opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises to extend their reach and secure new customers in ways formerly restricted to much larger firms. He also emphasized the vital importance of information security and noted that his country had developed guidelines to enable the banking and financial sectors to implement information security management systems. The World Summit on the Information Society should examine the question of information security more comprehensively than it had in the past.

47. The United Nations system had a crucial role to play in enabling ICT to promote the development efforts of developing countries. Development agencies should allocate sufficient resources to support the deployment of ICT in the developing world. Industry could contribute by developing more efficient, user-friendly and affordable technologies to bring ICT within the reach of millions. His delegation was confident that the ICT Task Force would facilitate the introduction of specific programmes to provide technical and financial support for capacity-building to developing countries.

48. **Mr. Moret** (Switzerland) said that ICT promoted sustainable development, empowerment and poverty reduction, and had an essential role to play in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. To maximize the contribution of ICT, however, governments, donors and other decision makers should shift their attention from bridging the digital divide to developing strategies specifically focused on helping the poor. An environment favourable to ICT had to be created, with a clear legal framework that respected

freedom of expression, diversity and the free flow of information, as well as the necessary infrastructure, and the target population had to have attained an adequate level of education. Competition was essential because lower prices would enable more people to have access to ICT. It was important to incorporate the latest technological advances, both in order to keep costs low and to ensure that the solutions adopted would be simple and appropriate to their context. Projects based on ICT had to be financially, environmentally and socially sustainable.

49. Additional investment was needed to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Although it was essential to mobilize private capital, that was possible only if the appropriate regulatory framework and infrastructure were in place and if there was a prospect of earning a return on the funds invested. Governments, civil society and the private sector all had their roles to play.

50. The success of the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society had been in large measure attributable to the fact that civil society and the private sector had taken an active part, in an atmosphere of openness and mutual respect. To build on the work done in the first phase, further progress was needed in three areas: the financing of ICT for development projects; Internet governance; and the follow-up and implementation of the documents prepared in Geneva, particularly the Plan of Action, at the national, regional and international levels, and particularly in the least developed countries.

51. **Mr. Atiyanto** (Indonesia) said that the use of ICT should achieve greater development in developing countries and the Millennium Development Goals. The digital divide should be turned into a digital opportunity in order to facilitate achievement of the Goals and the eventual integration of developing countries into the global economy. That would not happen unless all societies shared the same opportunities, particularly in terms of access to the information needed for their development. The transfer of technology as part of the process of globalization had not so far proved as beneficial as it might have been, and far too often developing countries had been provided with outdated technology which prevented them from being competitive in the global economy. That practice should cease and there should be widespread promotion of ICT education and training in developing countries. International cooperation should be extended and resources pooled for the betterment of all people. The establishment of the United Nations system ICT strategic framework was encouraging, and it was to be hoped that such developments would enable the United Nations to build capacity in developing countries to use ICT for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

52. Cooperation at the global level should be complemented at the regional level in order for the digital divide to be bridged. In that context, the Fifth Telecommunications and Information Technology Ministerial Meeting of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), held in Viet Nam in September 2005, had reaffirmed the region's commitment to building a connected, vibrant and secure community, as well as integration of the e-ASEAN sector by 2010. An agenda to accelerate the development of online services and applications and to boost electronic transactions among citizens, businesses, industries and governments in the region had been adopted. Another project of ASEAN countries was to build the information society and enhance the region's connectivity and competitiveness through the ASEAN ICT Focus 2005-2010.

53. The international community must play a greater role in creating favourable conditions for ICT to increase productivity, generate economic growth, create jobs and improve the quality of life for all. Indonesia therefore had high expectations for the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society and hoped that progress would be made in reaching equitable arrangements for Internet governance, with an expanded role for developing countries.

54. **Mr. Limon** (Suriname) said that ICT was needed to support socio-economic development, and that access to ICT was critical in building the information society. Access alone was not sufficient, however, as there was also a need to develop the necessary skills to make full use of ICT, and to move beyond merely accessing information to creating knowledge. Suriname supported efforts to place the potential of ICT in such areas as e-commerce and e-government at the service of development and at the disposal of the individual, and its Government was working towards full implementation of the Plan of Action produced in the first phase of the World Summit. Telecentres had been established in the interior of the country, a national

institute for ICT was being set up and a distance learning project was soon to be launched.

55. Suriname strongly supported the World Summit. It encouraged effective participation in the second phase, to be held in Tunis in November 2005, and attached great importance to achieving the objectives set forth in the Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action adopted at the first phase, in Geneva. Despite the many commendable initiatives undertaken, there was still a long way to go before the benefits of ICT could be extended to everyone. The digital divide was as wide as ever, with billions left unconnected.

56. **Mr. Chimphamba** (Malawi) said that ICT was central to sustainable development and the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. Malawi was committed to the World Summit, and hoped that the conclusions reached at it would be fully implemented to enable developing countries, particularly in Africa, to take full advantage of ICT and the digital revolution. Although Africa had the potential to reap significant gains from ICT, access to information and communication services was still insignificant in Africa. Although the continent was home to about 12 per cent of the world's population, it accounted for less than 1 per cent of the world's Internet content. Although the leaders attending the G-8 Summit in Okinawa in 2000 had pledged to provide developing countries with substantial assistance in promoting ICT, a great deal remained to be done, and continued assistance was needed.

57. **Mr. Khair** (Jordan) applauded the efforts by the United Nations to promote the use of ICT both to attain the development goals set forth in the Millennium Declaration and to achieve operating efficiencies within the organizations of the United Nations system. Switzerland and Tunisia were to be congratulated for hosting the two phases of the World Summit and it was important to heed the appeal made by the International Telecommunication Union for voluntary contributions towards defraying the costs of the Summit. While the first phase had set out the framework and concepts of using ICT to build the information society, the second phase would have to focus on practical solutions for implementing the Plan of Action agreed in Geneva and ensuring subsequent follow-up. In addition, it would need to consider financing mechanisms for the implementation of ICT and Internet governance.

58. **Mr. Gerus** (Belarus) commended the recent progress in coordinating and developing international cooperation for the expanded use of ICT. A significant role had been played by the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society, held in Geneva in December 2003. Belarus called on Member States and bodies of the United Nations system, chiefly the regional commissions, to contribute to the second phase, to be held in Tunis in November 2005. It was important, on the basis of an analysis of the results of recent joint efforts, to develop decisions adopted by the Heads of State and Government in the Geneva Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action. It was necessary to outline measures for further action in implementing the decisions of the Geneva phase.

59. Effective use of ICT in the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals was possible only when they were given their proper place among the development strategies and programmes of the international community. Bearing in mind the differences between regions and countries, the priority should be to bridge the divide. That priority should be tackled not only by governments and United Nations bodies but also by regional development banks, private funds and public organizations. National experience should be exchanged and partnership programmes developed. Belarus had proposed the creation under United Nations auspices of a trust fund to compensate software producers exporting products to developing countries at reduced prices.

60. Among countries with economies in transition, Belarus had a unique educational, scientific and production potential, and was open to cooperation in the utilization of ICT. In recent weeks, the President of Belarus had signed a bill on the establishment of a Park of High Technologies, which would not only develop science in Belarus but also provide for the export of ICT and related programmes. The Park would be governed by a special legal regime, with tax exemption and other preferential treatment for participants.

The meeting rose at 5.20 p.m.